

Annual Report 2019 - 2020





Centre for Assistance and for the Study of Cultic Phenomena

5655 Park Avenue, Suite 208
Montreal, Quebec
H2V 4H2

Phone: (514) 274-2333

Fax: (514) 274-7576

www.infocult.org

infosecte@qc.aibn.com



Office hours, Monday to Friday 9 – 5.

President's and Executive Director's Message

We are preparing this message during the Covid-19 pandemic. Info-Cult's staff is working from home and we continue to respond to inquiries for information and support without skipping a beat.

As a result of COVID -19, everyone's life has been turned upside down and the future is uncertain. Before this health crisis, Info-Cult was active in responding to those in need of information, assistance and support regarding the broad range of cult-related issues and concerns.

Since the beginning of the crisis, we have seen a considerable increase in the number of requests for information and help from families who are contacting us about a loved one becoming extreme in their beliefs in conspiracy theories which, in turn, have led individuals to cut off contact with their families who they view as non-believers, and even as part of the conspiracy. These family situations are similar to what we have observed in those who have become members of extreme religious groups.

The year 2020 marks our fortieth (40th) anniversary and we had been working on hosting an international conference in Montreal to mark this milestone event. Because of COVID-19, the conference has been postponed, but it will take place here in Montreal in July 2021.

In addition to responding to requests for help, information and support, we have begun the important task of digitalizing parts of our library collection. Videos that date from the early 1980's are being transferred in order to preserve them.

As you will note in our annual report, Info-Cult has accomplished much this year and has played a crucial role in so many lives. One of the major contributors to our efforts was long-time board member, colleague and friend, Dianne Casoni, who died suddenly in February. We mourn her loss and the enormous contributions and time she devoted to our field.

Since its founding, Info-Cult benefits from the close collaboration of its Board of Directors, made up of professionals in the fields of law, education, business and mental health. As well, with the support of many volunteers and an international network, Info-Cult continues to make important contributions to its mission of informing and educating the public about the cultic phenomenon.



Carolle Tremblay
President



Mike Kropveld
Executive Director



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1. INFO-CULT

Profile

Info-Cult, Centre for Assistance and for the Study of Cultic Phenomena is one of the leading organizations involved in responding to questions and concerns about cults, new religious movements and related groups and subjects. It is the only organization of its

kind in Quebec and unique in Canada. Info-Cult houses one of the largest collections in the world of information in this field and we provide a variety of services in response to individual and community needs.

Objectives

The objective of Info-Cult is to promote the dignity and integrity of the individual, the respect of collective and individual rights, the freedom of thought and expression, and the right of access to information.

Our objectives as indicated in our charter are:

- To promote the study of cultic phenomena;
- To sensitize, inform and educate the public about these phenomena;
- To assist people with problems related to these phenomena.

Board of Directors, Members, Volunteers, Staff

President

Carolle Tremblay
Lawyer
Jolicœur Lacasse Avocats

Louis Raphael

Vice President

Marie-Andrée Pelland,
Assistant Professor,
Sociology Department
University of Moncton

Isabelle Renaud

Herschel Segal
Businessman



Executive Director

Mike Kropveld

Secretary

Michael Crelinsten
Executive Director
Jewish Public Library



Treasurer

Dianne Casoni
Full Professor
School of Criminology, University of Montreal

We were sad to announce that on February 3, 2020, **Dr. Dianne Casoni**, colleague, friend and Info-Cult board member since 2009, died at the age of 66. Her sudden death has stunned us all and our thoughts go out to her family and friends.

Directors

Marie-Hélène Frappier
Professor of Philosophy
Ahuntsic College

Members

There are **26** who include former group members, parents, academics, lawyers and mental health professionals who share a common concern about

Volunteers

Volunteers play an essential role in Info-Cult's daily operations. Many people assume that Info-Cult is a large organization with different departments. The reality is Info-Cult operates with a skeleton staff. This impression has come about as a result of the profile Info-Cult has attained and is in large part due to the countless hours that volunteers have dedicated to the organization. There are more than **35** volunteers who donate their time and expertise to our organization.

Volunteers are involved, in policy development and decision making, providing legal advice, publicity, office work, fund-raising, research, public education, helping to organize conferences, cataloguing of new acquisitions to our documentation centre, translation of documents from English to French and French into English, in constructing and maintaining our web site and in a very important area - support to ex-members and families.

Volunteers who are former members play an integral role and we cannot underline enough the time that

the "cult" issue and are involved in supporting the activities and services of the organization.

they have volunteered to talk with:

- Other former members in need of support;
- Families who were in a time of crisis; and
- The media in search of a former member's experience.

Volunteers include:

- Professionals (including educators, mental health professionals, lawyers, business professionals, etc.) who recognize the need for Info-Cult and offer their expertise.
- Concerned individuals who have taken the time to learn about the issue.
- Individuals who have, or have had a child, sibling, parent or friend involved in a cultic group and understand the harm that such a crisis situation can cause.
- Former members who want to use their experience to alert others to the potential harm that involvement in a group can entail.

Staff

Info-Cult's founder and Executive Director, Mike Kropveld was the full-time staff person assisted by Antoine Tardif a half time employee who started in January. In addition, Info-Cult is assisted by one occasional contractual employee.

The Executive Director serves on the:

- Board of Directors [since 2009] **International Cultic Studies Association (ICSA)*** and as Chair of the ICSA Conference Committee

He has been recognized for his work in this field by:

The Government of Canada: In 1992 he received the 125th Commemorative Medal *in recognition of*

significant contribution to compatriots, community and to Canada.

ICSA: In 2007 he received the HERBERT L. ROSEDALE AWARD *presented in recognition of leadership in the effort to preserve and protect individual freedom.*

- * The International Cultic Studies Association (ICSA) founded in 1979, is the leading professional organization in the field. Based in the United States, ICSA is a global network of people concerned about psychological manipulation and abuse in cultic groups, alternative movements, and other environments. (www.icsahome.com)

Decision Making and Funding

Decision Making

The day to day operations and decisions are taken by the Executive Director. On matters that touch on policy and the direction of the center, Info-Cult's Board meets during the course of the year. **Five Board meetings** were held during the year and a **General Assembly**, at which **10 members**

assisted.

Alternative methods such as conference calls or email are used to reach a consensus on matters that require a rapid decision. Virtual meetings were instituted at the start of the pandemic.

Funding

Info-Cult receives funding from various sources, as shown in our financial statements which are accessible on our website. In **2019-2020**, Info-Cult received its annual grant from the **Quebec Ministry of Health and Social Services**, which is a major source of our funding.

includes:

- Individual donors
- Foundations,
- Companies,
- Religious communities and private groups,

Info-Cult is a registered Canadian charity - Revenue Canada No. 125754242 RR0001

Self-financing is a vital part of our funding and

History and Highlights of Community Service

Info-Cult was founded in **1980** under the name **Cult Project** and at the time was under the auspices of the B'nai Brith Hillel Foundation of Montreal. In August **1990**, **Info-Cult** was formed as an independent, bilingual, non-denominational centre run by a Board of Directors concerned by the impact of cult phenomena on our society.

Info-Cult is widely recognized for many of its services and specifically for its expertise in assisting families and individuals affected by cult-related problems and in providing the community at large with objective information on “cults”, “new religious movements” and related groups and subjects. Info-Cult has evolved since its founding and like the groups that it observes and studies has developed and modified its perception and understanding of cult phenomena, which is in turn reflected in the services it provides.

Through the years, there have been numerous events of note. A few selected ones include:

- Since our inception, and again in **2019-2020**, Info-Cult has assisted hundreds of individuals and families looking for help and information. We hired an additional half time employee, an important step for the future of the organization.
- In response to the expressed needs of former members Info-Cult **started a support group in 2018**. The group is run by a psychologist and psycho-educator who are generously giving of their time and expertise.
- 2014 - 2015 The recent global concerns about radicalization, extremism and violence, are what Info-Cult has been dealing with since we began operating in 1980.
- 2012: Info-Cult hosted the *International Cultic Studies Association* Annual Conference in Montreal. This conference is the only one of its kind in the world.
- Prior to December 21, 2012 Info-Cult responded to questions and concerns from the media and families about the “End of the World”.
- 2010 marked 30 years of service to the community. Over that period Info-Cult responded to tens of thousands of requests, detailed in our Statistics section.
- 2009: Info-Cult (www.infocult.org) has been on line for 10 years, providing a wealth of English and French information and is constantly updated.
- Info-Cult in collaboration with two other Montreal organizations organized a 2-day conference at the University of Montreal. ***Du croire à l'extrême et des pratiques sectaires: prendre en compte et intervenir.***
- Info-Cult plays a key role in organizing ICSA international conferences. Since 2009 our Executive Director, who is on the Board of ICSA, has served as Chair of the Conference Committee. In 2012 it was held in Montreal.

- The Publication in 2006 of Info-Cult's book by Mike Kropveld and Marie-Andrée Pelland, **The Cult Phenomenon: How Groups Function**, an updated English version of ***Le phénomène des sectes : l'étude du fonctionnement des groupes*** published in 2003. The two versions are downloadable from Info-Cult's website at no charge. Production of this book was made possible thanks to a grant from Québec's Ministère des Relations avec les citoyens et de l'Immigration and the English version thanks to the support of Canadian Heritage.
- In 2005 Info-Cult celebrated its 25th Anniversary of public service. A booklet commemorating the event was published and included congratulatory remarks from prominent individuals. The booklet is available on our website.
- 1999: www.infocult.org was launched.
- In the years 1994 and 1995 the world saw and heard about the tragedies related to the Order of the Solar Temple in Canada, Switzerland and France, the Branch Davidians in Waco, Texas and the Aum Shinri Kyo in Japan. Info-Cult served as an important resource to the media and others for background information about those groups and to assist in providing a context to understanding these tragedies.
- Info-Cult released its educational documentary,

Beyond the Mirage in 1994 an original English version of its French version *Au-delà des Mirages* which was launched in 1993.

The documentaries were made for the general public, with a special focus on youth, to raise awareness about the cult phenomenon. . The videos have been used as a teaching tool in schools across Canada and the United States.

- Also in 1993, Info-Cult submitted a report to a Quebec Parliamentary Commission on "alternative therapies". In its submission concerns were raised about the harm associated with the practices of certain alternative therapies.
- 1991 a bilingual information pamphlet was published by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (R.C.M.P.) in collaboration with Info-Cult. The pamphlet, entitled *Are You Vulnerable?* was distributed throughout Canada.
- In the 1980s different reports were completed, such as in 1987, on cultism in France, funded in part by the *Office Franco-Québécois pour la Jeunesse*; in 1986, on charitable solicitation in Canada, funded by *Consumer and Corporate Affairs Canada* and in the same year on consumer problems related to new religious movements in Quebec, funded by a grant from *l'Office de la Protection du consommateur du Québec*. And in 1982, a report on cults in the Francophone sector in Montreal.

Testimonials

Merci pour votre excellent travail ! J'apprécie beaucoup de recevoir vos courriels ! Je souhaite un joyeux temps des Fêtes à toute l'équipe. (Member of the public)

Still grateful for the help you gave to me many years ago, Mike, to understand my (now wife's) experiences as a member of the religious cult operating out of St. X. (Husband of a former member)

Bravo pour votre beau travail. Ça m'a beaucoup aidé (Parent).

Thank you very much for your support when I really needed some. Info cult is a professional and extremely knowledgeable organism out of which anyone who needs accurate informations about cults and gurus can get a great value and great support. Long Life. Much respect for your work. (Husband)

I appreciate all that Info-Cult does and I'm thankful for your assistance more than a decade ago. It was a catalyst for a loved one to exit a sect. I say thank you every day. (Family member)

Votre cause me tient à cœur, je vois dans ma pratique les dégâts que font les sectes. (Lawyer)

Thanks so much for helping me and my student RAs yesterday. Info-Secte is an amazing asset. (Professor)

I have read this and other articles you've sent, some of which I've emailed to clients, who, like myself, are former cult members. Thank you for your good work! Best, (Former member)

Merci beaucoup de votre accueil et de votre écoute surtout. Continuez le beau travail de sensibilisation! (Former member)

Thanks for the info, I will utilise all these resources. Nice to chat with someone that has a better understanding of what someone like me has been through. Thanks again. (Former member)

Les informations sur la séance de « X » s'est déroulée exactement comme vous m'aviez dit. Les mises en garde m'ont été précieuses et ont servi à me préparer face aux pressions pour l'inscription. Les gens étaient vraiment sous l'émotion de leur week-end de nettoyage! (Member of the public)

... Shunning is not a nice practice. This group doesn't blow people up but they promote emotional terrorism. Thanks for your help. (Former member)

I have read this and other articles you've sent, some of which I've emailed to clients, who, like myself, are former cult members. Thank you for your good work! (Former member)

Bonjour, Je voulais vous remercier pour notre conversation téléphonique et ces informations. Cela est très apprécié. Je vous ai trouvé très gentil et professionnel. J'ai décidé de ne pas y aller finalement. J'ai écouté mon intuition et mes rêves... Je vous remercie. Bonne continuation. (Member of the public)

Bonjour Mike, je vous écris pour faire un suivi au sujet de mon frère X, finalement tout s'est bien réglé, nous nous sommes parlés et il a raconté pourquoi il avait écrit cette lettre, d'un autre côté nous avons pu lui exprimer ce que nous nous avons vécu (quand je dis nous, je parle surtout de mon père) alors tout est bien qui finit bien. Un gros merci pour vos bonnes paroles données si généreusement. Ce fut très utile. (Sister of a member)

... Vos courriels sont très appréciés. Votre travail contribue à la réflexion : qu'est-ce que la liberté, qu'est-ce que la liberté de religion, qu'est-ce qu'une communauté de foi. Il ne faut jamais faire l'économie de la raison humaine. Merci pour votre travail (Head of a Religious Community)

Thank you so much for getting back to me. I would love to be able to speak with you directly as this is very important to me and has taken up much of my life since April. I see there are places I can make a donation to your organization and would love to do so simply because you took the time to get back to me. My email and questions were not exactly what we call to be normal questions so I thank you for not disregarding them. (Family member).

Pour l'aide que M. Mike Kropveld m'a apporté il y a quelques années avec une grande compétence, compréhension et aussi pour sa grande ouverture d'esprit. En espérant que ce don puisse aider le moins possible d'autres personnes. (Parent)

Bonjour, J'ai dû abandonner la proposition de reportage dont nous avons parlé ... Cependant, merci énormément pour vos explications. Cela m'a beaucoup aidé. Cordialement, (Étudiante en journalisme)

Vous n'avez pas idée combien vos conseils me sont précieux. Je les avais tous notés après notre rencontre. C'est vraiment de ce genre de conseils pratiques dont j'avais besoin! Merci encore, (Former member)

Dear Mike, I always "mean" to send you more donations than I do. You'll never know truly how much I appreciate your organization and the work it does. Sincerely, (Former member)

Bonjour Mike, J'ai pensé te donner des nouvelles vu que ça fait longtemps qu'on s'est vus. Je suis maintenant certaine de ne plus vouloir être de « X ». Je ne fais pas de démarches pour me dissocier officiellement, mais je 'fade out' comme on dit. Et j'ai commencé à le dire à mon entourage, comme à mes collègues de travail, ma famille et mes amis proches (membres ou non). (Former member)

...I will tell you that our son is now a practicing psychologist... You advised us... to Stay cool/that it did not sound like he was involved with a cult, and you were right. (Parent)

Je quitte mon travail demain après 35 ans de travail au secteur public et para-public. J'ai beaucoup apprécié les collaborations que nous avons eues au fil des ans. Non seulement ton expertise est unique mais la façon dont tu sais en faire bénéficier le public et les intervenants de tous les secteurs est remarquable. Tes conseils ont toujours été judicieux et ton approche a toujours témoigné d'un grand respect pour les gens que tu as aidés. Ce fut un plaisir de te connaître. (Professional, public service)

I hope all is well for you and Info-Sect. We are busier than ever... too busy really. I just wanted to let you know that we appreciate this news service that you provide. We look at it and utilize/download many of the articles. Thanks so much. Take care, (Non-profit rehab center for former members)

Je ne puis laisser passer l'occasion de la fin de ce merveilleux colloque des deux derniers jours sans vous remercier d'une façon toute particulière de votre dévouement à organiser cet événement... J'ai puisé dans ces conférences, des ressources nouvelles de compréhension que je pourrai vulgariser sur le terrain auprès des gens que je connais et à qui j'offre de l'écoute suite à leur passé dans des milieux religieux fermés. (Former member)

... Je trouve que vous faites un travail en profondeur depuis tant d'années, travail qui agit comme une vague de fond et qui nous mènera un jour pas trop lointain, espérons-le, vers une législation plus éclairée concernant les droits des enfants sur ce sujet très pointu. Mieux équipés, nous pourrions alors éviter à d'innombrables enfants les effets néfastes des expériences en milieux sectaires totalitaires, et par extension mieux accompagner les enfants-adultes qui posent le geste volontaire de quitter de tels milieux. Je suis reparti mieux outillé pour la compréhension des effets et des étapes du parcours psychologique quand il s'agit d'enfants élevés en bas âge dans ces groupes, avec de meilleurs moyens d'intervention et avec une ouverture plus humaine sur des possibilités d'aide pour ceux qui font l'expérience du vécu en milieu sectaire. J'espère avoir encore l'occasion de puiser à votre savoir. Humblement, (Former member)

2. SERVICES, RESOURCES AND ACTIVITIES

Assistance and Support Services

Overview

Most people's first contact with Info-Cult is by phone, email or Facebook. Office hours are from 9-5 Monday to Friday, though we can also be reached at other times by email, voicemail or Facebook.

In **2019-2020** Info-Cult dealt with **774 inquiries** for help and information. The requests come from people with different needs and from all walks of life (see Statistics for a breakdown). Among them are:

- **Former group** members who are having problems integrating or reintegrating into society. Increasingly over the past few years more callers include **second generation members**, (those born or raised in a group);
- **Families** who are worrying about a loved-one's involvement in a group (requests come from among others, parents calling about their children, adults about their parents, husbands about their wives or vice versa);
- **Mental health professionals**, lawyers and, law enforcement officers, or community workers seeking our advice about a specific situation or to refer a client;
- **Regular callers** who are in need of someone to talk to when going through a difficult period.

Many of the people contacting us are going through a difficult period, due to a loved-one's dramatic behaviour change on becoming involved in a group,

former members who are desperately seeking assistance and support to deal with their experiences and a myriad of other callers that contact us for help. This is our most important service and the one to which we devote the most time.

With nearly every caller we provide the added dimension of preventive education by taking the time to exclaim how Info-Cult functions, and our view and position on the issue of "cults". We clarify that we do not simply reply that a group is or isn't a cult. Even though there are extreme groups, the reality is that a simple answer in this area rarely exists. Our position is one that is moderate and balanced based on objective information as well as on our near 40 years of experience in working in this field.

Info-Cult has assisted thousands of families and ex-cult members since 1980 and this year responded among others, to **97 family related concerns**, and **21 former members of cultic or controversial groups**.



**Mike Kropveld, Executive Director
Info-Cult**

Second Generation Former Members

These are former group members who were born or raised in high demand / high control groups. These Second Generation Former Members (SGAs) in contrast to other former members have no previous non-group identity and the problems they face often vary considerably from other former members. More time is required in providing them with support and assistance in helping them integrate into a world that

Support Group

In response to the expressed needs of former members Info-Cult has started a support group in Montreal in 2018. The support group, being run in French, is for those who have gone through a controlling relationship (conjugal, ideological or group). The group is led by a psychologist and psycho-educator who are volunteering their time and expertise. The support group started in February 2018 and the meetings take place on a monthly basis, except for July and August.

The meetings are held at a local CLSC who are providing the space at no charge. **Twenty-four (24)** people attended the meetings. Unfortunately, this

Reasonable Accommodation

Over the years our society has become more culturally and religiously diverse. One effect of the changes has been that individuals and groups' religious beliefs and practices have sometimes come into conflict in the workplace, schools, hospitals, etc... Some cases have been widely publicized and on occasion gone before the Info-Cult's approach is to help avoid conflict, if possible,

in many cases is foreign to them. We encourage them to seek professional help in dealing with the emotional, psychological, and financial problems they face. Major obstacles for most former members include: few professionals knowledgeable about their specific predicament, there are costs involved and they have little or no money, they have minimal marketable skills and often no support network.

year 2 meetings were cancelled. One was as a result of a snow storm and the other because of COVID-19. We hope to continue offering the support group and are looking at the possibility of running it virtually.

The purpose of the group is to help former members move on after their experience. After being involved in an environment that was so intense, post-group life can be quite lonely and isolating. A group for former members can help counteract that sense of loneliness. It's also helpful for former members to see that the manipulations and power tactics used on them were similar whether they were involved in a religious, new age, political, therapy cult or cultic relationship.

by providing information and analysis, based on our experience and access to information on thousands of religious and other groups. We have responded to among others, businesses, landlords, schools, government and government agencies, Supreme Court of Canada.

Some of the situations we have been asked about include:

- Religious holidays
- Working conditions
- Blood transfusions, vaccinations and other medical questions
- Head gear
- Schooling (public and private)

- Clothing
- Diet
- Behavior

In many situations, our insight helped individuals, businesses, agencies and organizations resolve their concerns and avoid potential problems.

Radicalization (Cultic Dynamics and Radicalization)

During the past few years, we have assisted family and institutions with concerns about adolescents getting involved with extremist ideologies.

In 2017, the ICSA annual conference which Info-Cult co-organizes had as its theme: *Cultic Dynamics and Radicalization* Attacks by terrorists here and abroad have led some to suggest that the process of radicalization is similar to cult recruitment. Some have stated that terrorist groups are cults. Regardless of the label we tag onto a group there is

one striking similarity, and that is the violence that is carried out by some groups. For **forty (40) years** Info-Cult has been addressing concerns about high control groups commonly referred to as “cults” and to the issue of cultic phenomena in general. Info-Cult’s focus has been on how and why people join or are recruited and converted to extreme and marginal groups, how these groups function, how they change over time and the role of leaders in these groups

Missing Persons

Every so often we receive calls from families who haven’t seen or heard from a family member in months or even years. Their disappearance has been reported to the Police but uncertain of what has happened to their loved-ones and not content just to wait, they call us. These are some of the saddest calls we listen to.

We are seen as a last resort, a family grasping at straws, hoping that maybe their family member who disappeared is alive and in a “cult” and influenced to

cut off all contact with their past. The pain is evident in their voices as they describe to us the events surrounding the person’s disappearance.

We take the time to listen to them though the majority of these callers have no information that they can provide that would point to a group being involved in their loved ones’ disappearance. All we can do is empathize with their situation and indicate that if they do find any details possibly relating to a group, they should feel free to contact us again.

Education and Information Resources

Information for Students and Teachers

The subject of “cults”, “new religious movements” and marginal groups is included in the curriculum of many High Schools, Cegeps and Universities. Info-Cult responds to requests for information from students and teachers. Students are often referred to us and/or our website to obtain information and assistance for school assignments.

This is an important step in the development of the study and understanding of how groups (cults, new

religious movements and other related groups) function and their potential impact on individuals and society. We take the time to respond to phone inquiries by students and frequently have students visit our offices. Student projects can range from one-page written assignments, audio or video documentary projects to Master’s and Doctoral Theses. Students from Montreal as well as from other cities in Quebec have visited our offices.

Educational Programs

Staff and volunteers are invited to provide educational programs and give workshops. Subjects covered include public awareness about cults and new religious movements and workshops on

treatment issues for former members.

From year to year the number of presentations varies depending on our other activities.

Selected Publications from Info-Cult and Colleagues

Over the years Info-Cult staff, board and colleagues have given many presentations and written articles and book chapters. A selection is presented here. The complete list can be accessed from our website at: <http://infosect.freeshell.org/infocult/ICPubs.html>

- Kropveld, M. (2017). *A multi-perspective approach for understanding and evaluating groups*, presentation given at a conference in Wuhan, China — December 2-3, 2017.
- Kropveld, M. (2016). *Info-Secte à 35 ans : observations, perspectives et leçons retenues*, Nouvelles d’Info-Secte, No. 37, décembre 2016
- Kropveld, M. (2016). *Info-Cult at 35 : Observations, Insights, and Lessons Learned*, ICSA Today, Volume 7 No. 2. pp. 10-14
- Info-Secte, Rapport sur Lev Tahor, Communiqué de Presse, 13 juillet 2015

- Info-Cult, Report on Lev Tahor, Press Release, July 13, 2015
- CULT AWARENESS MOVEMENT, UNDERSTANDING THE RELIGIOUS LANDSCAPE: THE INFO-SECTE/INFO-CULT PERSPECTIVE An interview with Michael Kropveld, World Religions and Spirituality Forum, Posted 12/29/2015
- Segal, Herschel. Opinion: Une vision étroite de la radicalisation, La Presse, version en ligne, le 3 septembre 2015 (la version imprimée, le 31 août 2015).
- Segal, Herschel. Opinion: Federal anti-radicalization efforts have taken too narrow an approach, Montreal Gazette, July 16, 2015
- Tremblay, Carolle & Kropveld, M. Radicalisation et dérive sectaire: des parallèles?, Le Huffington Post Québec, 6 mars 2015
- Casoni, D., Pacheco, A., & Kropveld, M. (2015). State Intervention Against The Baptist Church of Windsor: From Law-Abiding Citizens to Perpetrators of Severe Child Physical Abuse, *International Journal of Cultic Studies*, Vol. 6, 2015, 83-99.
- Pacheco, A. (2015) Quebec francophone Conservative Protestants and youth protection laws: Conflict between secular law and divine law? News from Info-Cult, #29, February 2015.
- Pacheco, A. (2015) Les protestants conservateurs québécois francophones face aux lois de la protection de l'enfance. Conflit entre loi séculière et loi divine ? Nouvelles d'Info-Secte, #29, février 2015
- Tremblay, Carolle & Kropveld, M. Opinion: Terrorist groups and cults have some things in common, Montreal Gazette, February 20, 2015
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- Pelland, M-A. & Kropveld, M. (2013). Gourous et adeptes, Nouvelles d'Info-Secte, #25, juin 2013
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Info-Cult's Book

Info-Cult's *The Cult Phenomenon: How Groups Function* was released in 2006. This book is the updated version of our French version, *Le phénomène des sectes : l'étude du fonctionnement des groupes* (2003). Both versions are



Info-Cult's Videos

The documentaries *Beyond the Mirage* and the original French version *Au-delà des mirages* were produced as a tool to educate students and the

Conferences

ICSA Annual International Conferences In addition to conferences and presentations given by Info-Cult staff and volunteers, **Info-Cult** is one of the principal organizers of the Annual International Cultic Studies Association (ICSA - www.icsahome.com) Conferences. ICSA conferences and workshops offer practical assistance, research findings, and information on cults, new religious movements and other groups from the leading professional organizations in the field. Attendees and speakers are diverse, including academicians, helping professionals, former group members, current group members, families, clergy, educators, and others.

ICSA Conferences were initially held solely in the United States; however, in response to interest from outside the U.S. conferences have been held in Edmonton; Madrid and Barcelona, Spain; Brussels, Belgium; Philadelphia; Geneva, Switzerland; Washington D.C., Montreal (2012), Stockholm,

downloadable at no charge from our website. The books continue to be a relevant resource in understanding the cult phenomenon which encompasses the emergence of extreme and marginal beliefs and groups.



public. Both versions can be downloaded for free from our website.



Dallas, Bordeaux and most recently in Manchester, U.K. (2019). Two hundred and thirty-five (235) registered for the conference.

Working with ICSA has reinforced Info-Cult's belief in the importance of international cooperation. The international representation at these conferences reflects the global nature of this issue and over the years the growing collaboration of individuals and organizations in other countries around the world has strengthened the work we are involved in and has helped to enhance the quality of the information and assistance we are able to provide to those in need. The conferences include forums for the exchange of information, specifically new approaches in helping individuals and families with someone in a high intensity closed group and in treatment for those who have had a cult-related experience.

Info-Cult's involvement in the organizing of these conferences offers students and professionals from Montreal, the province of Quebec and the rest of the country the opportunity to participate and learn more about this subject and to present their work before an international audience.

Info-Cult's involvement has also helped to establish and strengthen our national and international contacts in this area.



2019 - ICSA (International Cultic Studies Association) Conference in Manchester, UK.
Marie-Hélène Frappier Info-Cult board member with Linda and Rod Dubrow-Marshall at the opening

Info-Cult has been collaborating with ICSA for nearly twenty years in organizing International

Meetings with Groups

Since 2009 Info-Cult in conjunction with three European organizations organizes **Meetings with Controversial Groups**. These meetings (participation is by invitation) are centred on topics which encourage discussion with groups often viewed as controversial or “cults” Meetings have taken place on a yearly basis among the participating governmental and non-governmental organizations. **Info-Cult** is the only non-European representative. The other organisations are **INFORM** (Information Network on Religious

Conferences. The 2020 conference was scheduled to be in Montreal to celebrate Info-Cult's 40th Anniversary. However, because of the pandemic the conference has been postponed to 2021.



Mike Kropveld, Executive Director of Info-Cult, addressing the 2018 Philadelphia conference delegates.

Participants at ICSA conferences include academics, mental health professional, law enforcement personnel, families, media, members and former group members and the general public.

The conference provides a range of sessions for academics, mental health professionals, families and former members.

[Manchester Agenda](#) (Manchester, U.K. – 2019)

Movements) London, United Kingdom – www.inform.ac, **CIAOSN** (Centre d'information et d'avis sur les organisations sectaires nuisibles) Bruxelles, Belgique – <http://www.ciaosn.be/> and **CIC** (Centre Intercantonal d'Information sur les Croyances) Genève, Suisse – www.cic-info.ch. The 2019 meeting was held in Brussels and hosted by CIAOSN. Exceptionally the 2020 meeting was held in February and hosted by the CIC. Their Executive Director was retiring at the end of that month after 18 years of service and this was an opportunity to participate in her retirement party.

Give But Give Wisely / A Policy for Renting Room Spaces

Two important Public Service Announcements (PSAs) are posted on our website to encourage people and organizations considering donating to a cause to *Give but Give Wisely*. For public and

private institutions thinking of renting space to an outside group we encourage them to develop a *Policy* on this. We provide a sample on our website that they can use.

Documentation Centre



Info-Cult's documentation centre has acquired a vast and unique quantity of materials on "cults", "new religious movements" and related groups and subjects.

The documentation centre is the largest of its kind in North America and houses, **thousands** of files, more than **1,200** programs on audio/video cassettes, CDs and DVDs, journals, newsletters, government and legal documents, academic reports, journals and thousands of books principally in English and French with a smaller collection of documents in Spanish, Italian, Japanese, and German. The collection spans critical and group generated information and other materials which are obtained from sources around the world.

Most of the collection has been acquired from

former members, private organizations and the public. Since 1999, new acquisitions of books, government reports, and journals to Info-Cult's documentation centre are listed on our web site with links that provide further information about the materials or access to the entire document.

Over the years our collection, which continues to grow, has become increasingly well known internationally and has attracted visitors to our centre from other countries. As the life of video cassettes is limited Info-Cult started to digitalize its collection in order to protect this unique collection. This is a vast undertaking and we will be looking for grants to help in this project as well as in the digitalization of other items in our collection.

Web Site

Info-Cult's website (www.infocult.org) has been online since 1999 and is regularly updated. We hope to have a new website online shortly. Our website provides: information about Info-Cult's history and services, advice for those who have a problem, help for those who are thinking about joining a group, general information on the phenomenon of "cults" and "new religious movements", Info-Cult's publications (including our books, conferences, articles, etc.), a large collection of government reports from different countries, a list of upcoming TV programs, conferences and other events.



Our web site provides an invaluable resource for those interested in learning about "cults", "new religious movements" and related subjects and

is visited by tens of thousands every year.

The use of our website by people looking for information on specific groups and on the cult phenomenon in general demonstrates the importance of this service. With its unique collection of information and its easy accessibility across all platforms, our website has been visited by hundreds of thousands of visitors from around the world. The planning, creation and maintenance of the site has been in the very competent hands of Robert Seely and Louis Raphael. Info-Cult is extremely fortunate to have dedicated volunteers, who over the years have given thousands of hours of their time and expertise to this very important project. We are extremely grateful for their commitment.

Facebook , Linkedin, Twitter

Info-Cult has had a **FACEBOOK** page since 2013. The idea and initial set up was the work of Isabelle Renaud a volunteer at that time and now a board member. Our page has 523 followers.

www.facebook.com/infocult/infosecte

We recently can be found on Twitter and Linkedin

twitter.com/info_secte

<https://ca.linkedin.com/in/mike-kropveld-info-secte-35bb01150>

This visibility allows us to reach a greater and more diverse audience.

Info-Cult on YouTube

Info-Cult's videos are easily accessible via our YouTube page:

<http://www.youtube.com/user/infosecte>



E-mail information lists (English and French)

For anyone interested, Info-Cult provides a free service whereby they can receive articles and other information on cults, new religious movements and related phenomena, announcements of upcoming conferences, television programs and updates about Info-Cult. On average subscribers who are both lists receive 25 per week.

The information sent on the English and French lists is generally different. There are **380** subscribers on the English list and **251** on the French list. Subscribers include individuals, former members, media, law-enforcement, community and religious groups, professionals (social workers, psychologists, lawyers, etc...).

Newsletter: News from Info-Cult

For **14 years** we have published a newsletter in which we have expressed our views on specific subjects as well as highlighting some of our activities. The newsletter which is published on an irregular basis is distributed primarily by email to **two thousand six**

hundred and sixty seven (2,667) unique addresses as well as mailed to selected organizations in the public and private sector and posted on our web site. In **2019–2020 three (3)** editions were published

Research Service

This service satisfies the needs of those who are looking for information on a group or subject and are not able to visit our offices.

Requests are received from the Montreal area as well as from the rest of the province, other parts of Canada and abroad.

Media appearances

Over the years Info-Cult staff, board members and volunteers have given thousands of interviews to national and international television and radio programs and documentaries or have provided information and interviews for newspaper and magazine articles. In the past year, Info-Cult staff and board members responded to more than **12 requests** from the media, for information or for an interview. Here is a selection of interviews/programs in which Info-Cult board were involved this year:

Marie-Andrée Pealland - ici Manitoba – le 4 octobre 2019

Mike Kropveld - Radio-Canada 25th anniversary of OTS – October 4, 2019

Carolle Tremblay – TVA – 20 septembre 2019 (Mission de l'esprit saint) – Nouvelles et aussi Entrevue with Julie Marcoux

Info-Secte - TVA Nouvelles article September 20, 2019

Dianne Casoni – JE – Mission de l'esprit saint – Feb. 6, 2020

Mike Kropveld Cold Turkey – Podcast - Ep.18-

Mike Kropveld - July 10, 2019 - Podcast IndoctriNation -Asking the Right Questions w/ Mike Kropveld - S4E1

Below is a selection of media in which Info-Cult board and staff have appeared over the past **40 years**.

Radio and Television

Radio

As It Happens, C.B.C. Radio
 B.B.C. Radio, England
 C.F.R.A., Ottawa
 C.F.R.B., Toronto
 C.H.R.C., Québec
 C.J.A.D., Montréal
 C.J.F.M., Montréal
 C.K.A.C. Montréal
 C.K.N.W., Vancouver
 C.H.O.I. Québec
 Fastband.com
 Internet Radio Network
 N.T.R., Montréal
 Newsweek Radio
 Q.R.77, Calgary
 Radio Autrichienne
 Radio-Canada International
 Radio France International
 Radio RTBF (Belgium)
 BBC
 Choix 98.1

Television

Second regard
 Claire Lamarche, TVA
 C.T.V. News, Canada AM, CTV
 Dateline, NBC
 Droit de parole, Radio-Québec
 Enjeux, Radio-Canada
 Fox on Psychology, Fox News, FOX
 Global News
 Independent Satellite News
 Infoman, Radio-Canada
 Légendes urbaines, Canal D
 Match de la vie, TVA
 MAtv
 Montréal ce soir, Radio-Canada
 National News, 5th Estate, CBC
 Newsworld
 National News, CTV
 Sunday Edition, CTV
 TVA Nouvelles
 RDI
 RDI – Les Grands Reportages
 Grand Journal, TQS
 Canal Historia
 Canal D

Print Media

Agence France Presse
 Amazon News Media
 Baltimore Sun
 Boston Globe
 Canoe.com
 Deseret News
 Elle (Malaysia)
 Gazette
 Globe & Mail
 Journal de Montréal
 Journal de Québec
 L'Actualité
 La Presse
 Le Devoir

Le Droit
 Le Figaro
 Le Monde
 Le Nouvelliste
 Le Nouvel Observateur
 Le Point AFP
 Le Québec sceptique
 Le Soleil
 London Daily Telegraph
 Maclean's Magazine
 McGill Daily
 Miami Herald
 New York Daily News
 New York Times

Newsweek
 Ottawa Citizen
 Phnom Penh Post
 Vice Magazine
 Canadian Press
 Québec Science
 Reuters
 The Walrus
 Time
 Toronto Star
 Toronto Sun
 USA Today
 Wall Street Journal
 Western Star

3. STATISTICS

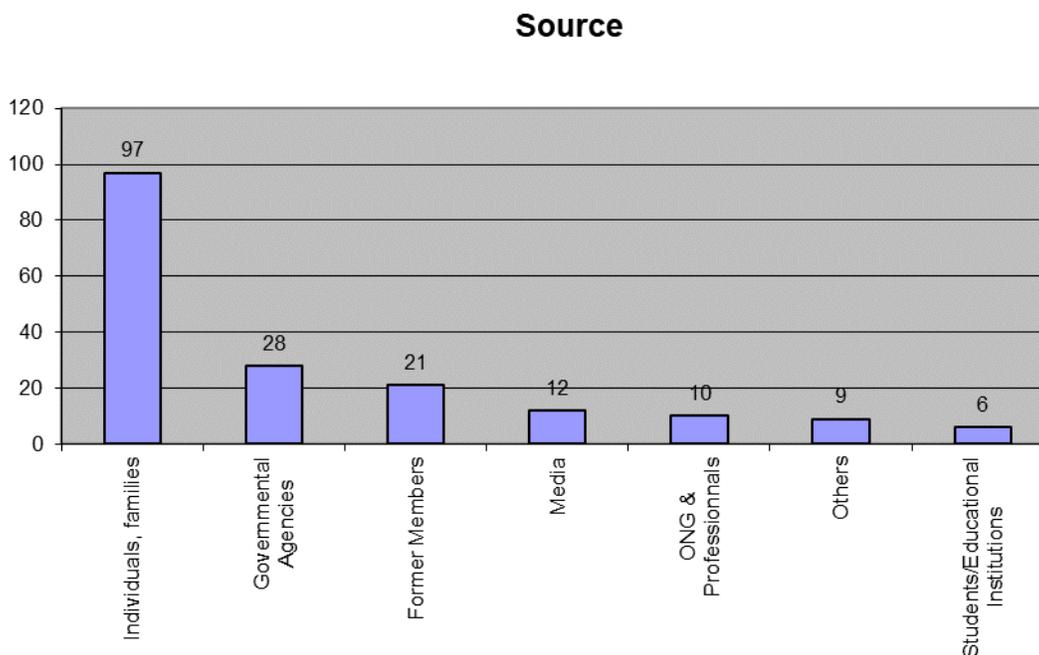
Info-Cult dealt with **774** calls, emails and Facebook messages in **2019-2020**.

These requests represent; individual and family concerns about a loved one beginning to get involved in a group or presently a member, individuals asking for information about a specific group or looking for general information on the cult phenomenon. Requests from professionals, businesses, non-profits, and other private and governmental institutions relate to a specific client, case, or situation. The media is quite interested in this issue and requests were either for interviews and/or information.

Info-Cult used to receive requests mainly by phone and letters. We no longer receive letters as inquiries are now received by phone, email and increasingly via FACEBOOK and other social media.

This change has impacted how we catalogue inquires. We are in the process of making changes to our record keeping and as a result this year's statistics are only a partial representation of what was actually received at our center.

Breakdown: Origin of Tabulated Requests



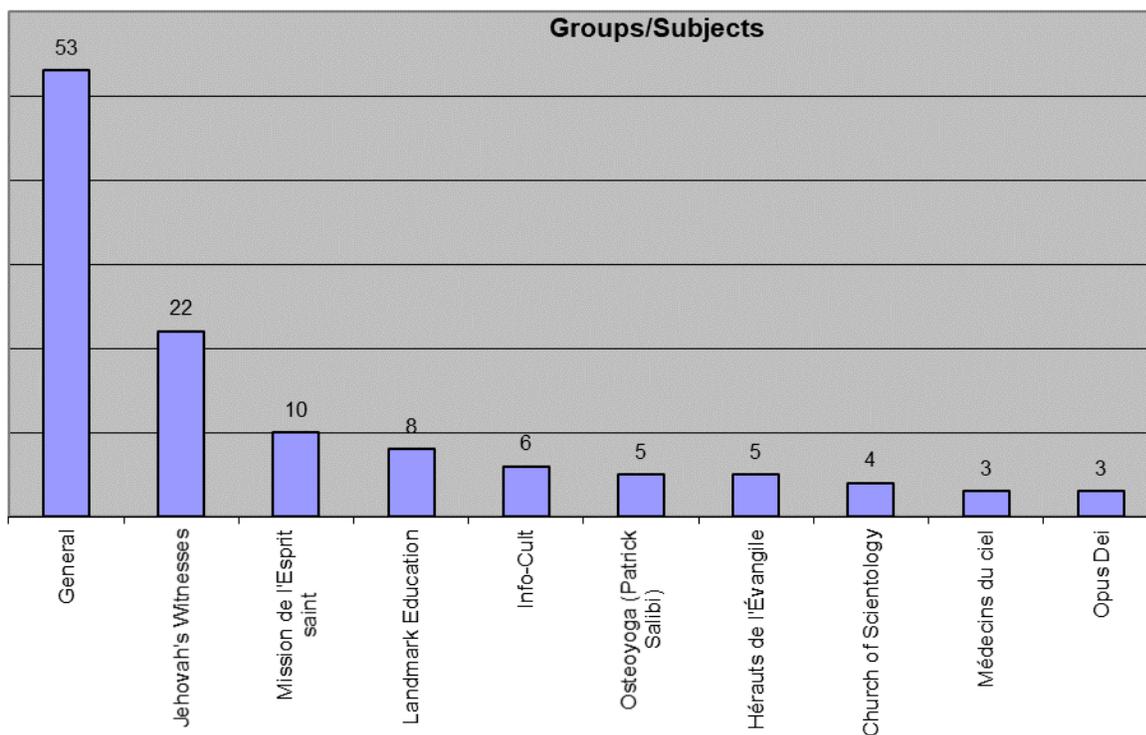
Breakdown of Groups/Subjects**

This year we received requests on about **112** different groups or subjects.

The most requested in **2019-2020** are indicated in the graph below. The majority of requests were either for general information on the cult phenomenon or concerned specific family situations. In most of the cases the name of the group was known but in a number of situations the name was unknown.

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This change has impacted how we catalogue inquiries. We are in the process of making changes to our record keeping and as a result this year's statistics are only a partial representation of what was actually received at our center



**The inclusion of a group on this list does not denote that it is a cult only that an inquiry was received about it. It does not include a breakdown of all emails or FACEBOOK requests.

Info-Cult Statistics: 1980-2020

The lists below provide a snapshot, of the past four decades of the 10 most requested groups or subjects. Certain groups or subjects appear throughout, while others have changed. There are several reasons to explain this. Firstly, some of the groups are more present in Quebec from which we get the most requests, thereby generating more interest or concern. Secondly, specific events or tragedies generate increased media scrutiny and subsequent public interest for a limited period of time. For example, Satanism was a hot topic in the 80s and 90s as a result of numerous newspaper stories, books and TV programs. As well, the Raelians have been the focus of countless media stories and exposes, including worldwide media coverage of their claims of having cloned a human being. Following these false claims, the media has been less willing to give the Raelians the publicity it seems to crave. Finally, some groups have ceased to exist over the years, or have changed the way in which they operate, thus attracting less attention and public interest.

10 Most Requested Subjects/Groups by Decades

1980-1990

- General (1,997)
- Church of Scientology (360)
- Jehovah's Witnesses (225)
- est [The Forum – Landmark Education] (173)
- Unification Church (134)
- Hare Krishna [ISKCON] (85)
- Satanism (82)
- Transcendental Meditation [TM] (51)
- Worldwide Church of God [WWCOG] (48)
- Rajneesh (44)

1990- 2000

- General (3,453)
- Jehovah's Witnesses (1,185)
- Church of Scientology (860)
- Info-Secte (760)
- Raelians (676)
- Satanism (274)
- Eglise Vie et Réveil (274)
- est [The Forum - Landmark Education] (247)
- Mormons (240)
- Rosicrucians (235)

2000-2010

- General (1,116)
- Info-Secte (393)
- Jehovah's Witnesses (388)
- est [The Forum - Landmark Education] (276)
- Raelians (262)
- Church of Scientology (224)
- Mission de l'Esprit Saint (124)
- Eglise Vie et Reveil (93)
- Eckankar (75)
- Mormons (74)

2010-2020

- General (424)
- Jehovah's Witnesses (215)
- Info-Cult (123)
- est [The Forum - Landmark Education] (73)
- Church of Scientology (63)
- Mission de l'Esprit Saint (58)
- Lev Tahor (43)
- Marcel Pontbriand (37)
- Mormons (25)
- Église essénienne chrétienne (24)

NOTE: The inclusion of a group on this list does not denote that it is a cult only that inquiries were received about it.

4. COMMUNITY RELATIONS AND NETWORKING

Community Relations

Info-Cult has established contact with many public and private organizations. We have built a network of groups with whom we exchange information, assistance, resources and referrals either on a regular basis or according to the need

On an ongoing basis Info-Cult receives requests and referrals from a variety of organizations. Info-Cult is also cited as a resource by academic and city libraries, community groups and referral centers, and in books, newsletters and journals. Over the last number of years the internet has played a major role in providing the public with access to resources on cults, new religious movements and related groups and subjects and Info-Cult can be found listed on a range of websites around the world. Selected examples follow:

arrondissement.com

quebec.cioc.ca/

cscapitale.qc.ca/bottindesressources/info-secte.htm

quebechebdo.com

recherche.211quebecregions.ca/record/QBC1262?UseEq=on

apavecq.qc.ca/

ciaosn.be

cultinformation.org.uk/

apologeticsindex.org/i00.html

factnet.org/cris_org.htm

<https://www.gemppi.org/>

einet.net/directory/43487/Cults.htm

victimsofviolence.on.ca/rev2/index.php

ex-cult.org/

dir.yahoo.com/Society_and_Culture/Religion_and_Spirituality/Cults/

<https://jewishboard.org/toile.com/search>

sciencepresse.qc.ca/cyber-express/286.html

fecris.org

icsahome.com

<http://wrldreels.org/2017/03/13/media-room/>

Here is a selected list of local and regional organizations and groups with whom we have contact or who refer people to us:

- Consumer Protection Offices
- L'Association québécoise Plaidoyer-Victimes
- CLSCs throughout the province
- Option-Consommateur
- Youth Protection Departments
- Kids Help Line
- Centre de Référence du Grand Montréal
- Public and Institutional Libraries
- Law Enforcement Departments
- Health professionals (psychologists, doctors, social workers, therapists, etc...)
- Community organizations such as consumer groups, youth centres, sexual assault centres and crisis intervention centres
- Missing Children's Network
- Quebec Sceptics
- Christian Direction
- Teachers (High School, Cegeps, and Universities)
- Clergy
- Religious and cultural communities (Catholic Community Services, Federation CJA, etc.)
- Shelters for Women and Children victims of conjugal violence
- Ecumenical Center
- Centre for the Prevention of Radicalization Leading to Violence (CPRLV)
- Secours-Amitié Estrie

National and International Networking

Info-Cult maintains contact with numerous individuals, agencies and organizations in the province of Quebec as well as having relations with individuals, academics, professionals and organizations specializing in the area of cults and new religious movements across Canada and worldwide. This networking enables Info-Cult to exchange information and to be up to date with the current research, studies and activities in this area.

Some of the many organizations around the world with whom we keep contact:

Canada:

- Centre d'écoute et d'interprétation des nouvelles recherches du croire – CEINR - Montreal
- Centre de ressources et d'observation de l'innovation religieuse – CROIR - de l'Université Laval

United States

- International Cultic Studies Association – ICSA
- New England Institute of Religious Research – NEIRR
- Centers for Apologetics Research
- Freedom of Mind Resource Center
- Wellspring Retreat and Resource Center

Japan

- Mind Control Research Center
- National Network of Lawyers Against Spiritual Sales

Australia

- Cult Counselling Australia
- Cult Information & Family Support Inc

Europe

- Information and Advice Center on Harmful Sectarian Organizations – CIAOSN - (Belgium Government centre)
- Human Rights Without Frontiers International – HRWF Int'l – (Belgium)
- Interministerial Mission of Vigilance and Combat against Sectarian Aberrations - MIVILUDES – (French Government centre)
- Centre intercantonal d'information sur les croyances – CIC - Switzerland (government funded)
- Asesoramiento e Informacion sobre Sectas – AIS - Spain (government funded)
- Family Action Information and Resource – FAIR - England
- Information Network Focus on Religious Movements - INFORM - England (partly government funded)
- Cult Information Centre (England)
- European Federation of Centres of Research and Information on Sectarianism - FECRIS – (government funded)
- Bundesstelle für Sektenfragen – (Austrian government office)
- SFRAEM (*Société Française de Recherche et d'Analyse de l'Emprise Mentale*)
- Dialogue Ireland Trust (Ireland)
- Hjälpkällan - Sweden (government funded)
- U.U.T. – Uskontojen Uhrien Tuki Ry- Finland (government funded)